



NORTHERN HARDWOOD NOTES

Sowing Pregerminated Northern Red Oak Acorns

Northern red oak is extremely difficult to regenerate, although it has produced good acorn crops nearly half of the last 32 years in northern Wisconsin. Field trials have shown that for successful seeding, you must protect acorns from predation by wildlife and sow them when temperatures are most favorable for germination.

How do you achieve these conditions? By scarifying the sowing site, and sowing in early spring. Scarification destroys the habitat and cover favorable to acorn-consuming wildlife. And on a scarified surface the temperature stays near 34° F (the optimum germination temperature) longer than it does on litter. Germination drops sharply as temperature climbs beyond 50° F.

To Get The Best Germination

1. Collect acorns either before they fall, or pick them up right after fall.
2. Stratify over winter according to accepted practices.
3. Pregerminate acorns by raising the temperature slightly to 34° F for 12 to 14 days.
4. Sow on scarified, litter-and vegetation-free sites in early spring before the soil surface warms appreciably.

Six weeks after field trials, all acorns sowed this way had germinated and were growing without losses. In contrast, acorns sowed on undisturbed litter (both on the surface and buried) were all eaten by predators. Sowing after temperature is too high also results in failure-even if acorns are protected from wildlife.

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